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RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 4150
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 2225
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 006270

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DEPARTMENT FOR EAP, EAP/MLS
PACOM FOR FPA HUSO
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/12/2016
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SUBJECT: OCTOBER 12 UPDATE: NEW LEGISLATURE NAMED

REF: BANGKOK 636

Classified By: DCM Alexander A. Arvizu. Reason 1.4 (a and d)

11. (C) Summary. The King approved the appointment of 242 persons to the interim National Legislative Assembly. The legislators come from a cross-section of Thai society and include 35 active duty military. The military permitted a small pro-democracy gathering in Bangkok. Soldiers remain posted at Thai TV stations but are no longer in newsrooms or studios. Interim Prime Minister Surayud plans to visit Laos and Cambodia this weekend. Media reports speculate that Thailand's senior police official, Police General Kowit Wattana, may be on the way out. Stories about widespread flooding dominate the local media -- pushing political stories to the second page. End Summary.

NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY APPOINTED

12. (U) The King endorsed the 242 members of the CNS-selected National Legislative Assembly (NLA) today. It consisted of prominent figures from the government, NGOs, academia, business, and military sectors. Of the 61 military men in the Assembly, 35 are still on active duty, including Privy Councillor General Prem's current Chief of Staff, Vice Admiral Phajun Tamratheep and General Paisarn Katanyoo, Deputy Army CINC and close aide to CNS Chairman General Sonthi.

13. (U) Representatives from various political parties were also named, including Surin Pitsuwan of the Democrat Party, Akkarapol Sorasuchart of Mahachon and Kanchana Silapa-archa of Chat Thai. Other notable figures included Foreign Ministry Permsec Krit Garnjana-Goonchorn, and interim Constitution drafters Meechai Ruchuphan and Borwornsak Uwan. Others include former Deputy PM under Thaksin, Wissanu Krea-ngarm, as well as controversial Muslim cleric Ismail Lutfi Japakiya, rector of the Yala Islamic College.

MILITARY DOES NOT INTERFERE WITH DEMOCRACY PROTEST

14. (C) On October 11, a group of about 15 protesters held a demonstration at Democracy Monument in Bangkok to commemorate what would have been the ninth anniversary of the promulgation of the 1997 Constitution. The gathering was organized by members of the Campaign for Popular Media Reform, headed by Supinya Klangnarong. The group called for the immediate lifting of bans on civil liberties and the lifting of martial law. They then laid wreaths at the foot of the Democracy Monument to "mourn the lost constitution." The military took no action to prevent the demonstration, and none of the demonstrators were detained for violating the decree banning political gatherings of more than five persons. In a telephone conversation with POL/FSN, Supinya reported that the demonstration was monitored by about 10 police officers, but the officers did not interfere with the demonstration.

MILITARY PRESENCE REMAINS AT TV STATIONS

15. (C) Our media contacts report that soldiers remain at several Thai TV stations although they are no longer in newsrooms or studios.

FLOODING AND SHIN CORP SALE DOMINATE MEDIA

16. (U) Lead press stories in the papers and electronic media on October 12 focused on flooding throughout Thailand -- which could be the worst seen in Bangkok in a decade. For most media, the second most prominent story focused on discussions between Thai and Singaporean officials about whether Temasek Holdings of Singapore's 96 percent purchase

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of former PM Thaksin's Shinawatra Corporation would be allowed to stand or whether Temasek must reduce its holding to 49 percent.

CORRUPTION INVESTIGATIONS UNDERWAY

17. (U) Two government bodies are conducting investigations into alleged corruption committed by officials in the previous government. The National Counter-Corruption Commission was revived after a long hiatus (reftel). The CDR also created the Asset Examination Council (AEC), a special committee set up with a one-year mandate to delve into major, politically motivated corruption cases. The AEC has identified eight major cases that they will pursue, including the CTX scanners at the new airport, the tax liability of Thaksin's two children in the Shin Corp sale, and EX-IM Bank loan to Burma. We anticipate that the AEC will want to act as quickly as possible to document and publicize their findings on major corruption issues. Initial findings may be announced this month.

POLICE BOSS BEING PUSHED OUT?

18. (C) Media sources report that CNS member, Police General Kowit Wattana, has been stripped of some recently granted powers and may be forced out of his current job as Thailand's top cop. Kowit, who appeared to be a late-comer in supporting the coup, was made Chair of the Interim Police Commission -- a post previously held by Thaksin himself -- shortly following the coup. Today it was announced that, although he will remain National Police Chief, Kowit will be replaced by interim PM Surayud as Chair of the Commission. The move prompts some to speculate that Kowit may eventually be put out to pasture altogether due to his recent decision to go ahead with promoting a number of Thaksin loyalists within the police.

SURAYUD PLANS TO VISIT LAOS AND CAMBODIA

19. (U) Interim Prime Minister Surayud has announced he will visit Laos on October 14 and Cambodia on October 15; this will be his first foreign travel as head of government. He will be accompanied by Foreign Minister Nitya Pibulsonggram and Finance Minister Pridiyathorn Devakula but will not travel with anyone from the Council for National Security.
BOYCE